

Chapter 11

Water Sets



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Reasons to start with water sets using kill-type traps and techniques

No need dispatch

Reduces chance of catching a non-target animal

Less chance an animal will escape



Content Standard - *Students demonstrate an understanding of the procedures for making safe, effective, and selective sets in or near water*

Introduction

Beginning trappers should focus on water sets for muskrat and mink. This is an excellent way to catch some fur with minimal equipment while gaining knowledge and experience.

Water trapping saves on startup expenses and avoids most non-target animals. It also avoids the need to dispatch animals held in footholds or other live-restraining devices. When a trapper becomes skilled at trapping muskrats and mink, additional equipment can be purchased to use for larger furbearers such as fox, coyotes, raccoon, beaver, and otter. Generally equipment used for these furbearers is more expensive than the small traps used for muskrat and mink.



Explain the benefits of using traps that meet best management practice (BMP) specifications for water sets

Trappers, biologists, veterinarians, and researchers have evaluated many traps. BMP traps have been tested for:

- Animal welfare
- Efficient ability to capture and hold animals
- Selectivity for furbearers
- Practical use in the field
- Trapper safety concerns



Describe three reasons new trappers should start with water sets using kill-type traps or submersion trapping techniques

Body-gripping traps of suitable size or foot-holds in a submersion set should be used whenever possible for water trapping. Colony traps and cable devices are also used for water sets.

It is beneficial for beginning trappers to start with water sets as they are easier to make than dry land sets. Due to the location of the sets, water trapping is selective for semi-aquatic species and avoids most non-target animals.

The use of body-gripping traps and properly made submersion sets results in a furbearer's death. This prevents trappers from having to dispatch animals. Additionally, these sets make it unlikely that a furbearer will escape.

Submersion sets are frequently called "drowning sets," but semi-aquatic furbearers (muskrats, mink, river otters, beaver, and nutria) cannot take water into the lungs so, technically, they asphyxiate.



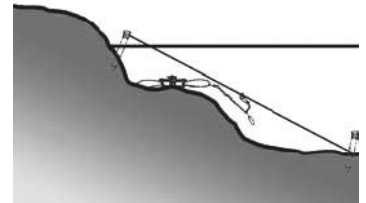
Describe a basic technique for making submersion sets

Use submersion trapping techniques whenever possible for aquatic furbearers such as muskrat, mink, beaver, nutria, and river otter. A technique for making submersion sets with foothold traps is:

- Sliding wire technique

Small body-gripping traps are good choices for trapping muskrat and mink in shallow water. Set body-gripping traps at the entrance to a muskrat den, in a muskrat channel, or at the entrance to a pocket you create in the bank.

Guarded foothold traps are sometimes used for muskrat trapping where kill-type traps are not useable and the water is too shallow for a submersion set. The guard is designed to prevent muskrats from escaping.



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Submersion Set - Before the set is finished push the stake the rest of the way into the ground at the water's edge to keep the animal from tangling on the stake.



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Sliding wire anchor - You can use a heavy object or a stake to anchor the sliding wire in deep water

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Anchor in deep water



Attach wire to stake



Drive stake in all the way



Place the trap in position



Muskrat Hut

Some states restrict trapping near muskrat lodges. Know the regulations for Michigan.

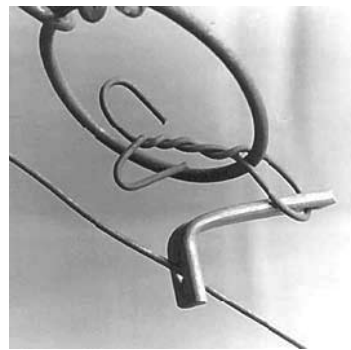
The sliding wire technique allows you to take advantage of a furbearer's instinct to swim toward deep water to escape. Make the set as follows:

- Attach a sliding lock to the end of your trap chain;



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Make sure the sliding lock points toward the deeper water



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The lock will prevent the animal from swimming back

- Use a heavy object such as a rock for an anchor, or use a stake you can push into the stream bed in deep water;
- Attach a wire to the anchor or stake;
- Put the anchor or the stake in water deep enough to fully submerge the furbearer you are trying catch;
- Bring the wire to the shoreline; put the sliding lock on in the correct direction, so that it will slide down the wire toward deep water but not back the other way;
- Attach the free end of the wire to a stake; drive the stake in the bank near your set; the slide wire should be tight;
- Make your set.

When the animal is trapped it will swim to deep water and be pulled under in a short time.

A special muskrat trap, called a colony trap, is also used for submersion sets.



Explain or demonstrate the procedures for making three common water sets and name the furbearers that can be captured in them

Runway Sets

When muskrats travel back and forth in shallow water they create a runway in the mud. Colony traps are a special type of cage trap designed to catch muskrats in a runway and keep them submerged. You can catch several muskrats at a time in a colony trap. There is a swinging door on each end. The door opens easily when a muskrat travels the runway. The door falls closed after the muskrat enters. Make certain the water is deep enough to keep the muskrats from sticking their noses out the top of the trap to breathe. During cold weather water levels may drop a bit at night because some water sources may freeze. In this situation, make sure colony traps are a few inches below the daytime water level. Body-gripping traps are also used in runways.

Pocket Set

A pocket set is one of the most effective water sets for muskrats and mink. To make a pocket set, find a bank that is straight up and down. At the waterline start digging a pocket into the bank at a level where the bottom will be about two inches below the water. The pocket should extend one to two feet into the bank and angle up. Put the bait or lure above water level at the back of the pocket.

The pocket should be about six inches in diameter for muskrat or mink. Set a body-gripping or foothold trap of the correct size for the animal you plan to catch.

The trap can be placed at the mouth of the hole in case the animal doesn't want to go all the way inside. If you are in an area where dogs may be a concern do not use meat or fish bait, or raccoon gland lures. To avoid dogs you can place the trap well inside the pocket, or make the set under cover such as low-hanging branches or exposed tree roots.

Trail Set (Blind or Natural Set)

Furbearers use the same trails at the water's edge on a regular basis. Find a narrow spot on the trail to make your set. If you don't find a natural place for a trail set, use logs or rocks to narrow the path.

Dig a shallow depression in the bank at the narrow spot. Set a foothold trap in the depression, bedding it firmly into the mud. Use the sliding wire technique to make it a submersion set.



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Colony trap in runway



Dig pocket at water line



Shave bank on both sides



Put bait in pocket

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Place trap at pocket mouth



Narrow place for a trail set



Cubby - Make the sides first



Make the top of the cubby

You do not need to use lure or bait on a trail set. Trail sets are effective for muskrat, raccoon, mink, beaver, and otter.



Dig a place to put the trap. Note the log placed to guide animal to trap.



Bed trap so it doesn't wobble.



Put the trap in the depression. Use slide wire technique.



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Small sticks in water guide animal to trap.

Cubby Set

Cubby sets are used for mink and muskrats where the bank slopes too much to make a pocket set. If you find tracks on a sloping bank make a cubby out of rocks, logs, or old boards. Place your bait or lure at the back of the cubby. You can use your foot or a trowel to make a depression for your foothold trap at the entrance to the cubby. Use a submersion trapping technique with a slide wire.

Muskrat Den Set (Bank Hole Set)

Muskrats make dens on the banks of streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds just under the surface of the water. If you see chewed up pieces of vegetation floating on the water, look for a den nearby. Muskrats also make lodges out of

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cattails or reeds in shallow water marshes. You will find openings around the base of the hut where you can make den sets.

Body-gripping traps are the best choice for den sets. You can place small sticks in the upper jaws of the trap to hold it in an upright position.

Climb Out Set (Feedbed Set)

Muskrats, beaver, otter, and nutria leave distinct trails, sometimes called slides, at the spot where they climb out of the water to feed. You can put a foothold trap just under the water where the slide enters. Use a sliding wire submersion rig. No bait or lure is needed.



Muskrat climb out



Set foothold in water

Float Set

Muskrats often climb onto floating logs. You can take advantage of this habit by setting traps on logs or homemade platforms.

Make float sets in water more than a foot deep. Use muskrat size foothold traps on a chain or wire. When the muskrat is trapped it will enter the water and the weight of the trap will pull it under. Place branches or sticks over the top of the trap to keep ducks or other birds from stepping on it.

Spring Run Set

The place where a spring run or small stream enters a larger body of water is a good place to trap muskrat, mink, or otter. Use a foothold trap and submersion techniques.



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Place trap at entrance. Use bait or lure and submersion techniques with cubby sets



Muskrat Den



Den Set - Body-gripping trap



Den Set - Sticks hold trap

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Beaver scent mound



Beaver trap at scent mound



Channel set for beaver

Obstruction Set

An obstruction set is a variation of a trail set. Look for a tangle of tree roots, log piles, or similar obstructions on the bank. Mink will enter the water at these points. You can bed a foothold trap in shallow water using a sliding wire submersion rig. No bait or lure is needed.

Scent Mound Set

Beaver make mounds of mud and mark them with castor. Hide beaver-sized foothold traps under 3 to 4 inches of water with a securely staked sliding wire submersion rig. If beaver are in the area and you can't find a scent mound you can make one. Mark it with castor lure. This set is most effective in late season.

Channel Set

Muskrat, mink, otter, and beaver follow paths under the water called channels. This is a good place to set a submerged body-gripping trap. These furbearers regularly enter confined spaces so they don't usually shy away from a body-gripping trap in their path.

Place the trap at the bottom of the channel. If the channel is too wide you can arrange sticks or brush in a way to narrow the path and guide the furbearer into the trap. Use a blocking pole across the top of the trap to make the animal dive below it. Stakes and sticks are used to anchor the body-gripping trap and position it correctly in the channel.

Open Water Beaver Set

An open water beaver set is made like a scent mound set, except that it is baited with fresh poplar or other food instead of castor lure.

Otter Latrine

Otter regularly visit certain spots near the water called latrines. You will see piles of scat containing fish scales and bones at otter latrines. Set a foothold trap in 3 to 4 inches of water at the spot where the otter travels in and out. Use a sliding wire submersion technique.

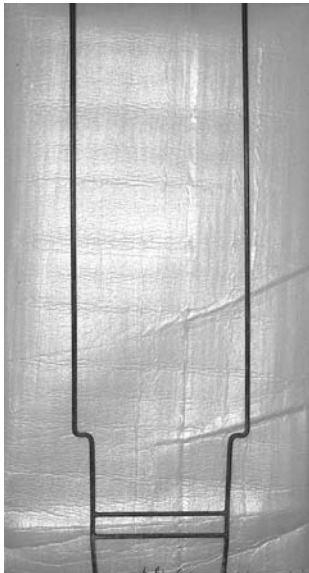


Under Ice Beaver Bait Set

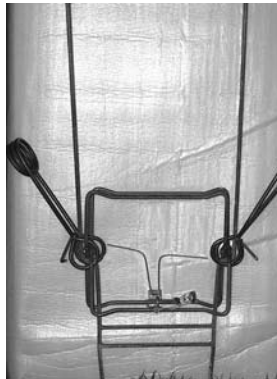
You can catch beaver under ice using foothold or body-gripping traps. Make sure the ice is safe and have someone with you when you make these sets in case you need help.

Chop a hole in the ice near a beaver den. Some states have a minimum distance the trap must be set away from the den. *Check the Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for current regulations.* Attach the trap and the bait to a long pole and push it deep down into the mud under the water. The pole should extend well out of the ice. A trapped beaver should not be able to reach the hole in the ice where it can breathe.

Examples of sets placed under water or under ice:



Stabilizer



Trap on Stabilizer

Many Trappers use stabilizers for body-gripping traps. Stabilizers save time, and avoid the need to cut poles and tie them together.



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Setting a blocking pole above a channel set - beaver

Making a set under the ice for beaver is not for beginners. Find someone experienced to help you. Always trap with a friend or family member, especially when you are using large body gripping traps and working on ice!



Raccoon in trap - This photo illustrates a desired strike of a body-gripping trap just behind a furbearer's head. This strike will result in immediate unconsciousness, and quick death.

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Use body-gripping traps with bent corners to reduce fur damage



Baited Body-gripping trap for beaver

Use a dry limb for the mounting pole or beaver may eat it. Use fresh poplar if available, for bait. The crosspole is lashed to the mounting pole above the ice to prevent loss of the trap. Change the bait to fish for otter.



Baited beaver set using a foothold

A small platform is attached to a large limb. The double long-spring is wired to the board. The trap chain is attached near the bottom of the limb to prevent the beaver from reaching the surface. A wire also runs from the chain to the crosspole above the ice.

Set body-gripping traps so that the trigger is on the bottom to reduce fur damage



Teepee set under ice for beaver

The teepee set is made on land and submerged under ice. It can be baited or placed in front of a bank den. Note that the trigger is set on the bottom. Many trappers do this so that the trigger wires will encounter a beaver's belly instead of the back. If fur damage from the triggers occurs, it is preferable for it to be on the belly side.



Underwater Sets



Body-gripping trap supports

Trappers can use sticks or poles to stabilize body-gripping traps in channels, or in front of dens. These photos show how to place the sticks. Sticks should always be placed inside the springs of jaws so they won't interfere with the jaws closing.

Sticks can also be placed beside traps to narrow a channel and guide the animal to the trap.

Always center a body-gripping trap in a channel or in front of a den. Beaver swim to the middle.

Some trappers twist wire triggers together in a straight line and center the trigger. This reduces the chance that a beaver carrying a limb will spring the trap prematurely.

Body-gripping traps with weak springs can cause fur damage

If an animal is frozen in a body-gripping trap, thaw it before removal to prevent fur damage